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TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC 3512
INFO RUEHCP/AMEMBASSY COPENHAGEN 0359
RHMFIUU/US CUSTOMS AND BORDER PROTECTION WASHINGTON DC
RHMFIUU/DEPT OF HOMELAND SECURITY WASHINGTON DC
RUEAORD/BICE ASAC JFK NEW YORK NY
RHMFIUU/HQ BICE WASHINGTON DC
RHMFIUU/HOMELAND SECURITY CENTER WASHINGTON DC

UNCLAS REYKJAVIK 000337

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COPENHAGEN FOR DHS: KLUGMAN

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TAGS: [CVIS](#) [KHLS](#) [PREL](#) [KPAO](#) [IC](#)

SUBJECT: ICELAND MEDIA ROUNDUP: MEDIA FIRESTORM OVER DEPORTATION
CASE BADLY DAMAGES US IMAGE

¶1. Summary: The media storm over the deportation of Erla Osk Arnadottir continues on television, radio, and in the newspapers. Arnadottir's account of being shackled and jailed in New Jersey before being deported for her overstay on the visa waiver program in 1995 has created a media frenzy. End summary.

¶2. On December 12 the Icelandic media picked up the story of Erla Osk Arnadottir's detention and deportation from the U.S. for having overstayed on the visa waiver program in 1995. News stories and editorials appeared in the newspapers on December 13. A scathing editorial in Morgunbladid entitled "Police State?" stated "Countries that allow themselves to treat visitors like Erla Osk the way in which she describes are on a fast track to becoming a police state. It is incomprehensible to think that an Icelandic citizen has ever been treated the way Erla Osk describes, not even in former communist or fascist countries." The editorial also states that the number of Icelandic travelers to the U.S. will decline dramatically because, "Who wants to endure being shackled hand and foot and paraded through the airport on route to the boarding gate?"

¶3. The reporting and commentary on the story was highlighted on television and radio stations last night (December 13) and continues to be prominently featured in all newspapers today (December 14).

¶4. The story led prime time news coverage on all the television stations. The widely respected evening newsmagazine program, Kastljós, had an in-depth interview with Erla Osk Arnardottir. She described her treatment in detail, and when asked if she wanted to return to the US said, "not anytime soon."

¶5. The December 14 headlines in all three newspapers were very similar - "Humiliating Treatment of Erla Osk." All media reported that the MFA summoned the US Ambassador to discuss Erla Osk's case, and considers this a very serious issue. The Minister for Foreign Affairs told the Ambassador that US authorities owe Erla an apology. Morgunbladid reported that the Ambassador said that the USG is taking the issue seriously, is investigating the matter thoroughly, and will report back to the MFA with its findings. In addition, the papers reported new allegations of mistreatment of an Icelandic traveler to the US at the border.

¶6. Comment: The media focus is on the "humiliating and degrading" treatment, especially the traveler being shackled and chained. The incident has raised concern among the general public that if this could happen to someone like Erla Osk Arnadottir, then it could happen to me. The public sentiment is captured in the concluding line of an op-ed contributor in the newspaper "24", "If I risk traveling to the US to visit my friends and family, will I be

subject to the same treatment at the boarder as Erla Osk Arnadottir?" Icelanders are outraged that Erla Osk Arnadottir was treated as a dangerous prisoner for making, in their view, a "minor mistake." End Comment.